

CLAIMS:

What is claimed:

- Sub A3
1. A method of storing digital data within a Flash Memory System comprising the steps:
 - a. mapping a non-volatile memory medium within the Flash Memory System into a plurality of independently addressable, independently programmable and independently erasable memory blocks including a plurality of Dedicated Data Blocks and a plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks comprising a first Dedicated Overhead Block and a second Dedicated Overhead Block;
 - b. mapping each of the plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks into a plurality of pages, wherein the plurality of pages within each Dedicated Overhead Block are addressed according to an identical set of consecutive page addresses;
 - c. mapping each of the plurality of Overhead Pages into a plurality of Overhead Segments, wherein the plurality of Overhead Segments within each page are addressed according to an identical set of consecutive segment addresses, each Overhead Segment comprising a plurality of registers including a Physical Address Register and a flag field; and
 - d. correlating the plurality of consecutive Overhead Page addresses within the first Dedicated Overhead Block to a respective plurality of consecutive Virtual Logical Block Addresses including a first Logical Block Address defining a first Logical Block of User Data correlated to a first Overhead Page address defining a first Overhead Page.
 2. The method according to Claim 1 further comprising the steps:
 - a. receiving from a host a first set of User Data defined according to the first Virtual Logical Block Address;
 - b. storing the first set of User Data in a first Dedicated Data Block defined according to a first Virtual Physical Block Address;
 - c. identifying a first available segment within the first page, an available Overhead Segment comprising an Overhead Segment that is unused, non-defective, and not

- 8 obsolete, and wherein the first available segment is defined by a lowest segment
9 address of available segments comprising the first page;
10 **A1** d. storing an address of the first Dedicated Data Block in the Physical Address
11 Register of the first available Overhead Segment.
- 1 3. The method according to claim 1 wherein each of the Overhead Segments further
2 comprises an error correction code.
- 1 4. The method according to Claim 1 further comprising the step of consolidating all current
2 Overhead Segments within the first Dedicated Overhead Block into a second Dedicated
3 Overhead Block, a current Overhead Segment comprising an Overhead Segment that is
4 used, non-defective, and not obsolete.
- 5 5. The method according to Claim 4 wherein the step of consolidating the first Dedicated
6 Overhead Block into a second Dedicated Overhead Block further comprises the steps:
7 a. moving data stored within a current Overhead Segment within the first Overhead
8 Page of the first Dedicated Overhead Block to a replacement Overhead Segment
9 within a second Overhead Page within the second Dedicated Overhead Block, the
 replacement Overhead Segment being a lowest addressable segment within the
 second Overhead Page, the second Overhead Page being defined by an identical
 page address as an address defining the first Overhead Page.; and
 b. erasing the first Dedicated Overhead Block.
- 1 6. The method according to Claim 1 wherein the step of correlating the plurality of
2 consecutive page addresses to a respective plurality of consecutive Virtual Logical Block
3 Addresses is performed through a RAM space manager.
- 1 7. The method according to claim 6 further comprising the steps:
2 a. storing a logical address within a non-volatile correlation register within the Flash
3 Memory System; and
4 b. loading a physical address into a correlation register of the RAM space manager
5 upon power up.

1 8. The method according to Claim 2 wherein the flag field within each Overhead Segment
2 further includes a used flag, an obsolete flag, and a defective flag.

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1 9. The method according to Claim 8 wherein the step of identifying the first available
2 segment further comprises the step of examining select flags within select Overhead
3 Segments within the first page.

1 10. The method according to Claim 9 wherein the step of storing an address of the first
2 Dedicated Data Block in the Physical Address Register of the first available Overhead
3 Segment further comprises the step of setting the used flag within the first available
4 Overhead Segment to a second position, thereby indicating that overhead data has been
5 stored therein.

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- 3 plurality of independently addressable, independently programmable and
4 independently erasable memory blocks including a plurality of Dedicated Data
5 Blocks and a plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks comprising a first Dedicated
6 Overhead Block and a second Dedicated Overhead Block;
7 A
8 b. mapping each of the plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks into a plurality of
9 consecutively addressed Overhead Segments, wherein the plurality of segments
10 within each Dedicated Overhead Block are addressed according to an identical set
11 of distinct segment addresses, each segment comprising a Physical Address
12 Register and a Flag Field; and
13 c. correlating the first Dedicated Overhead Block to a first group of Virtual Logical
Block Addresses including a first Virtual Logical Block Address.

15. The method according to Claim 14 further comprising the steps:
a. receiving from a host a first set of User Data defined according to a first Virtual
Logical Block Address;
b. identifying a first available Overhead Segment within the first Dedicated
Overhead Block, the first available Overhead Segment comprising a lowest
addressable available Overhead Segment within the first Dedicated Overhead
Block, an available Overhead Segment comprising an Overhead Segment that is
unused, non-defective, and not obsolete;
c. storing the first set of User Data in a first Dedicated Data Block defined according
to a first Virtual Physical Block Address;
d. storing an address of the first Dedicated Data Block in the Physical Address
Register of the first available Overhead Segment.

16. The method according to Claim 15 further comprising the step of consolidating all
current Overhead Segments within the first Dedicated Overhead Block into consecutive
Overhead Segments within the second Dedicated Overhead Block, a current Overhead
Segment comprising an Overhead Segment that is used, non-defective, and not obsolete.

17. The method according to Claim 16 wherein the step of consolidating the first Dedicated
Overhead Block into a second Dedicated Overhead Block comprises the steps:

- 3 a. moving data stored within a first current Overhead Segment in the first Dedicated
4 Overhead Block into a lowest addressable available Overhead Segment within the
5 second Dedicated Overhead Block, and
6 A) b. erasing the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

1 18. The method according to claim 17 wherein the step of consolidation is preceded by a step
2 of writing overhead data into a last addressable segment of the first dedicated overhead
3 block.

1 19. The method according to Claim 14 wherein each Overhead Segment further comprises an
2 Error Correction Field for storing error correction data supporting the User Data.

1 20. The method according to Claim 14 wherein the step of correlating is performed through a
2 RAM space manager.

1 21. The method according to Claim 15 wherein the flag field within each Overhead Segment
2 further includes a used flag, an obsolete flag, and a defective flag.

1 22. The method according to Claim 15 wherein the step of identifying the first available
2 Overhead Segment further comprises the step of examining select flags within select
3 Overhead Segments within the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

1 23. The method according to Claim 21 further comprising the step of setting the used flag
2 within the next available Overhead Segment to a second position, thereby indicating that
3 overhead data has been stored in the next available segment.

1 24. The method according to Claim 17 wherein the step of moving data stored in a first
2 current overhead segment into a first available overhead segment further comprises the
3 steps:

- 4 a. examining select flags within select Overhead Segments comprising the first
5 Dedicated Overhead Block, and
6 b. examining select flags within select Overhead Segments comprising the second

7 Dedicated Overhead Block.

1 25. The method according to claim 20 further comprising the steps:

- 2 a. storing a logical address within a non-volatile correlation register within the Flash
3 Memory System; and
4 b. loading a physical address into a correlation register of the RAM space manager
5 upon power up.

1 26. The method according to claim 14A further comprising the steps:

- 2 a. marking as defective a dedicated overhead block; and
3 b. re-designating a dedicated data block as a dedicated overhead block.

4 27. A method of storing digital data within a Flash Memory System comprising the steps:

- 5 a. mapping a non-volatile memory medium within the Flash Memory System into a
6 plurality of separately addressable, separately programmable and separately
7 erasable memory blocks comprising a plurality of Dedicated Data Blocks and a
8 plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks, the plurality of Dedicated Overhead
9 Blocks including a first Dedicated Overhead Block and a second Dedicated
10 Overhead Block;
11 b. mapping each of the plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks into a fixed overhead
12 field and a random overhead field, wherein the fixed overhead field of each of the
13 plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks comprises a plurality of consecutively
14 addressable Overhead Segments defined according to an identical sequence of
15 Overhead Segment addresses, and a random overhead field comprises a plurality of
16 consecutively addressable Overhead Segments; each Overhead Segment
17 comprising a plurality of registers including a Physical Address Register;
18 c. correlating the plurality of consecutively addressable Overhead Segment within the
fixed overhead field of the first Dedicated Overhead Block to a first group of
consecutively addressable Virtual Logical Block Addresses including a first fixed
segment correlated to a first Virtual Logical Block Address.

1 28. The method according to Claim 27 further comprising the steps:

- a. marking as defective a dedicated Overhead Block; and
- b. re-designating a Dedicated Data Block as a Dedicated Overhead Block.

29. The method according to Claim 27 wherein the step of correlating the plurality of consecutively addressable Overhead Segments within the fixed overhead field of the Dedicated Overhead Block to a first group of consecutively addressable Virtual Logical Block Addresses is performed through a RAM Space Manager.

30. The method according to Claim 29 further comprising the steps:

- a. storing a logical address within a non-volatile correlation register within the Flash Memory System; and
- b. loading a physical address into a correlation register of the RAM Space Manager upon power up, thereby correlating a logical address with a physical address in the RAM Space Manager.

31. The method according to Claim 27 further comprising the steps:

- a. receiving from a host a first set of User Data defined according to the first Virtual Logical Block Address;
- b. storing the first set of User Data in a first Dedicated Data Block defined according to a first Virtual Physical Block Address;
- c. storing overhead data corresponding to the first Virtual Logical Block Address in the first Overhead Segment within the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

32. The method according to Claim 31 wherein the step of storing overhead data in the first Overhead Segment comprises the steps:

- a. identifying the first fixed segment within the fixed overhead field of the first Dedicated Overhead Block;
- b. determining if the first fixed segment is available;
- c. storing the overhead data supporting the first Virtual Logical Block Address in the first fixed segment when the first fixed segment is available; and
- d. storing the overhead data corresponding to the first Virtual Logical Block Address in a first random Overhead Segment when the first fixed segment is not available,

the first random segment comprising a lowest addressable unused and non-defective Overhead Segment within the random overhead field of the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

33. The method according to Claim 31 wherein the step of determining that the first fixed segment is available comprises the step of examining flags within the first fixed segment.

34. The method according to claim 31 further comprising the steps:

- a. mapping the random overhead field of each Dedicated Overhead Block into a plurality of pages, each page comprising a plurality of segments;
- b. designating a lowest addressable segment in each page within the random overhead field as a Status Segment; and
- c. mapping each status segment into a plurality of registers to function as an update map.

35. The method according to Claim 31 wherein the step of storing overhead data corresponding to the first Virtual Logical Block Address in the first random Overhead Segment further comprises the steps:

- a. locating a last previous segment used for storing overhead data supporting the first Virtual Logical Block Address;
- b. setting an obsolete-flag corresponding to the last previous segment to a second value, indicating that overhead data within the last previous segment is now obsolete; and
- c. setting an used-flag in the first random Overhead Segment to a second value, indicating that overhead data is now stored in the first random Overhead Segment.

36. The method according to Claim 34 wherein the update map contains one register corresponding to each segment within the fixed overhead field of the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

37. The method according to Claim 27 further comprising the step of consolidating current overhead segments within the first Dedicated Overhead Block into the second Dedicated

Overhead Block when the first Dedicated Overhead Block becomes full.

38. The method according to claim 37 wherein the step of consolidating current overhead segments comprises the steps:

- a. correlating a second Overhead Segment within the fixed overhead field of the second Dedicated Overhead Block to the first Virtual Logical Block Address;
- b. copying data within the first overhead segment into the second overhead segment.

39. A method of storing digital data within a Flash Memory System comprising the steps:

- a. mapping a non-volatile memory medium within the Flash Memory System into a plurality of separately addressable, separately programmable and separately erasable memory blocks comprising a plurality of Dedicated Data Blocks and a plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks, the plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks including a first Dedicated Overhead Block and a second Dedicated Overhead Block;
- b. mapping each of the plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks into plurality of Super Overhead Fields, including a first Super Overhead Field within the first Dedicated Overhead Block;
- c. mapping each of the plurality of Super Overhead Fields into an identical set of consecutively addressable Overhead Segments, each of the plurality of Overhead Segments comprising a plurality of registers including a Physical Address Register;
- d. correlating a first Super Virtual Logical Block Address defined by consecutive Virtual Logical Block Addresses to the first Dedicated Overhead Block; and
- e. correlating a first Virtual Logical Block Address within the first Super Virtual Logical Block Address to a first Overhead Segment Address within the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

40. The method according to Claim 39 further comprising the steps:

- a. marking as defective a dedicated Overhead Block; and
- b. re-designating a Dedicated Data Block as a Dedicated Overhead Block.

- 1 41. The method according to Claim 39 wherein the step of correlating a first Super Virtual
2 Logical Block Address to the first Dedicated Overhead Block is performed through a
3 RAM Space Manager.
- 1 42. The method according to Claim 41 further comprising the steps:
2 a. storing a logical address within a non-volatile correlation register within the Flash
3 Memory System; and
4 b. loading a physical address into a correlation register of the RAM Space Manager
5 upon power up, thereby correlating a logical address with a physical address in the
6 RAM Space Manager.
- 1 43. The method according to Claim 42 wherein the non-volatile correlation register is within
2 an extension field of a Super Overhead Field of a Dedicated Overhead Block.
- 1 44. The method according to Claim 39 further comprising the steps:
2 a. receiving from a host a first set of User Data defined according to the first Virtual
3 Logical Block Address;
4 b. storing the first set of User Data in a first Dedicated Data Block defined according
5 to a first Virtual Physical Block Address;
6 c. storing overhead data corresponding to the first Virtual Logical Block Address in a
first Overhead Segment defined by the first Overhead Segment Address within the
first Super Overhead Field.
- 1 45. The method according to Claim 44 wherein the step of storing overhead data is preceded
2 by the step of incrementing from a previous Super Overhead Field within the first
3 Dedicated Overhead Block to the first Super Overhead Field.
- 1 46. The method according to Claim 44 wherein the step of storing overhead data further
2 comprises the step of setting an used-flag within the first Overhead Segment to a second
3 position indicating that overhead data is stored within the first Overhead Segment.
- 1 47. The method according to Claim 46 wherein the step of storing overhead data further

comprises the steps:

- a. locating a last previous segment within the first Dedicated Overhead Block used for storing overhead data supporting the first Virtual Logical Block Address; and
- b. setting an obsolete-flag within the last previous segment to a second value, indicating that overhead data within the last previous segment is now obsolete.

48. The method according to Claim 39 further comprising the step of consolidating current overhead segments within the first Dedicated Overhead Block into the second Dedicated Overhead Block when overhead data has been stored in a final Super Overhead Field within the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

49. The method according to claim 48 wherein the step of consolidating current overhead segments comprises the steps:

- a. identifying a first current Overhead Segment defined according to the first Overhead Segment Address within the first Dedicated Overhead Block ; and
- b. copying data within the first current Overhead Segment into a second overhead segment defined according to the first Overhead Segment Address within the first Super Overhead Field of the second Dedicated Overhead Block.

50. A flash memory device for storing User Data comprising a plurality of separate, independently addressable, independently programmable and independently erasable non-volatile Physical Memory Blocks distinguishably defined by a plurality of Physical Block Addresses including:

- a. a plurality of dedicated data Blocks for storing User Data; and
- b. a plurality of Dedicated Overhead Blocks for storing Overhead Data including a first Dedicated Data Block and a second Dedicated Data Block.

51. The Flash Memory device according to Claim 50 wherein each Dedicated Overhead Block is identically comprised of a plurality of separately addressable Overhead Pages, each block following an identical sequence of page addresses.

52. The Flash Memory Device according to Claim 51 wherein each Overhead Page is

2 comprised of a plurality of independently addressable and independently programmable
3 segments, including a plurality of Overhead Segments.

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- 1 53. The Flash Memory Device according to Claim 52 wherein the plurality of independent
2 Overhead Segments are used for storing Overhead Data, each Overhead Segment
3 supporting one Virtual Logical Block of User Data, each Overhead Segment comprising:
4 a. physical Address Register for storing a Physical Address for locating
5 corresponding User Data; and
6 b. a flag field.

- 1 54. The Flash Memory Device according to Claim 53 wherein a first-group of Virtual Logical
2 Block Addresses including a first VLBA are assigned to the first Dedicated Overhead
3 Block, such that overhead data generated in support of the first VLBA will be stored in an
4 Overhead Segment within the first Dedicated Overhead Block.

- 5 55. The Flash memory Device according to Claim 54 wherein sequential VLBA's within the
6 first group of VLBA's are respectively correlated to sequentially addressed Overhead Page
Addresses within the first Dedicated Overhead Block, including a first Virtual Logical
Block Address correlated to a first Overhead Page within the first Dedicated Overhead
Block, such that Overhead Data supporting the first Virtual Logical Block Address will be
stored in an Overhead Segment within the first Overhead Page.

- 1 56. The Flash Memory Device according to Claim 54 wherein each of the plurality of
2 Dedicated Overhead Blocks further comprise of a fixed Overhead Field and a Random
3 Overhead Field, the fixed Overhead Field being comprised of a plurality of consecutively
4 addressed Overhead Pages, and the Random Overhead Field being comprised of a
5 plurality of consecutively addressed Overhead Pages.

- 1 57. The Flash Memory Device according to Claim 56 wherein consecutively addressed
2 segments comprising the consecutively addressable Overhead Pages within the Fixed
3 Overhead Field of the first Dedicated Overhead Block are respectively correlated to
4 sequentially addressed Virtual Logical Block Addresses.

Al 58. The flash memory device according to Claim 57 wherein the plurality of consecutively addressed segments comprising the consecutively addressed Overhead Pages within a first Overhead Page within the Random Overhead Field of the First Dedicated Overhead Block comprise a Status Segment and a plurality of Overhead Segments, the Status Segment defined according to a lowest segment address among the plurality of segments within the first Overhead Page.

59. The Flash Memory Device according to Claim 54 wherein each Dedicated Overhead Block is further comprised of a plurality of Super Overhead Fields including a first Super Overhead Field, a Super Overhead Field comprised of a whole number of pages, each Super Overhead Field within the first Dedicated Overhead Block comprised of an identical number of pages, wherein consecutive Overhead Segments within first Super Overhead Region are respectively assigned to consecutively addressed Virtual Logical Block Addresses which comprise a first SuperBlock.

60. The Flash Memory device according to Claim 50 further comprising a controller for regulating and controlling the operation of the Flash Memory.

61. The Flash memory device according to Claim 50 further comprising a volatile RAM Space Manager, the Space Manager comprising a plurality of correlation fields for correlating virtual addresses and physical addresses.

62. The Flash Memory device according to claim 61 wherein the Space Manager comprises a Flag Register comprising a plurality of Status Flags.

63. The Flash Memory device according to Claim 62 further comprising a means for loading data from a non-volatile memory area into the Space Manager on start up.

64. The Flash Memory device according to Claim 62 further comprising a means for loading data into the Space Manager upon a reset command.

1 65. The Flash Memory device according to Claim 50 further comprising means for generating
2 error correction data corresponding to User Data stored within the Flash Memory System.

A 1 66. The Flash Memory device according to Claim 50 comprising a means for re-designating a
2 Dedicated Data Block to function as a Dedicated Overhead Block in the event of failure of
3 an existing Dedicated Overhead Block.

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